

# House of Courtenay

**House of Courtenay** was a medieval noble house, with branches in France, England and the Holy Land.

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Original undifferenced Coat of Arms of Courtenay: *Or, three torteaux*. Apparently adopted by Renaud de Courtenay before his death in 1190 and before the split of the family into French and English branches, as the arms are used both in France and England. These are therefore very early arms as heraldry came into widespread use from about 1200–1215

## Origin

The house was founded by Athon, the first lord of Courtenay in France. Athon took advantage of the succession crisis in the Duchy of Burgundy between Otto-William, Duke of Burgundy and Robert II of France to capture a piece of land for himself, where he established his own seigneurie (lordship), taking his surname from the town he founded and fortified.

Athon was succeeded by his son Joscelin, who had three sons: Miles, who was Lord of Courtenay after him; Joscelin, who joined the First Crusade and became Count of Edessa; and Geoffrey, who also fought in the Holy land and died there.<sup>[1]</sup>

In the 12th century, Reginald de Courtenay (d.1190), son of Milo de Courtenay (d.1127), quarrelled with King Louis VII of France and moved to England: His French lands were forfeit, and passed, with his sister Elizabeth, to Louis' brother Peter, who took the name "Peter de Courtenay".

## The Crusader house of Courtenay

Joscelin de Courtenay arrived in Outremer with the third wave of the First Crusade and proved himself capable, becoming in turn Lord of Turbessel, Prince of Galilee,<sup>[2]</sup> and (in 1118) Count of Edessa.<sup>[3]</sup> He was succeeded in 1131 by his son, Joscelin II, but the county was lost in 1144, and Jos died in captivity in 1159. His son, Joscelin III, was the titular Count, while his sister, Agnes, became Queen of Jerusalem by marriage to King Amalric and was mother to two monarchs, Baldwin IV and Sibylla. Joscelin III died in the 1190's, succeeded by two daughters; his last property was passed by them to the Teutonic Order.

## The English House of Courtenay

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Reginald de Courtenay's grandson, Robert de Courtenay (d.1242), feudal baron of Okehampton, Devon, in right of his mother Hawise de Curcy (d.1219),<sup>[4]</sup> married Mary de Redvers, daughter and heiress of William de Redvers, 5th Earl of Devon (d.1217). Robert's great-grandson, Hugh de Courtenay, 9th Earl of Devon, (d.1340) inherited the Earldom of Devon in 1335 on the extinction of the male line of the de Redvers family. The title was subsequently recreated for Hugh de Courtenay, nephew of Hugh the elder Despenser. The family is one of the most ancient in England, currently headed by Charles Courtenay, 19th Earl of Devon.

## The Capetian House of Courtenay

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Reginald de Courtenay's daughter, Elizabeth, was given in marriage, together with his forfeited French lands, by the French Capetian King Louis VII with whom he had quarreled, to his youngest brother Peter of France (d.1183), henceforth known as Peter I of Courtenay. Peter and Elizabeth's descendants were members of the Capetian House of Courtenay, a cadet branch of the House of Capet, the French Royal House. Their descendants acquired through marriage the County of Namur and the Latin Empire of Constantinople. This branch became extinct in the male line in 1733, with the name Courtenay passing on to the Bauffremont family. See also the Houses of Montlhéry and Le Puiset.



Location of Courtenay in the Gâtinais (Loiret), France. It is situated about 65 miles SE of Paris and was thus well within the control of the French kings and had no connection to any west-coast French possessions of the English kings (i.e. Normandy, Anjou, Aquitaine etc.), from which originated most early continental incomers to England. In this respect the English Courtenay family is unusual.

## Claim to French royal status

The House of Bourbon, which acquired the French throne with the accession of Henry IV of France in 1589, was another cadet branch of the Capetian dynasty. Under the Salic law, males descended in male line from Hugh Capet are princes of the blood – i.e., they have the right to succeed to the French throne in the event that the male line of the royal family and of more senior princes die out. Hence, the then impoverished Capetian House of Courtenay, being agnatic descendants of Louis VI of France, sought to be acknowledged as "princes du sang" (Princes of the Blood Royal) and "cousins to the king," two titles normally reserved for the members of the royal family and prized for the seats at the Royal Council and the Parliament of Paris that they conferred upon its holders.

Moreover, the Bourbons had difficulty producing surviving male dynasts in quantity until the mid-17th century. The Capetian Courtenays were, after the Bourbons, the most senior surviving agnatic branch of the House of Capet, and under strict application of Salic law the Crown would pass to them should the Bourbons fall extinct.

Three Bourbon kings in a row – Henri IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV – turned down their petitions. That the Bourbon monarchs confined the French royalty to the descendants of Louis IX is evidenced by the Treaty of Montmartre (1662) which named the non-Capetian House of Lorraine as the next in line to the French throne after the Bourbons, thus bypassing the Courtenay branch, a Capetian family. Although the Courtenays protested against this clause, their claims to the princely title were never acknowledged by the Paris Court of Accounts.

The last male member of the French Courtenays died in 1733, but his niece married the Marquis de Bauffremont, and her descendants assumed the title of "Prince de Courtenay" with dubious validity, which they bear to this day. However the marquis de Bauffremont was made on 8 June 1757 Prince of the Holy Roman Empire (inheritable by all male-line descendants); this title was recognised in France. Bauffremont-Courtenay are also princes of Carency and dukes of Bauffremont.

## Genealogy

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Athon

Joscelin I of Courtenay, married 1. Hildegarde de Gâtinais (sister of Geoffrey III of Anjou), 2. Isabel de Monthéry, daughter of Guy I of Monthéry  
Hodierna, married Geoffrey II, Count of Joinville  
Miles of Courtenay (d.1127), married Ermengarde of Nevers  
William de Courtenay  
Joscelin de Courtenay  
Reginald de Courtenay (d.1190), married firstly, Hélène du Donjon, and secondly, after his move to England, Maud du Sap, d.1219, daughter of Robert FitzEdith (d.1172) (illegitimate son of King Henry I of England by Edith FitzForne).  
Renaud de Courtenay, married Hawise de Curcy, heiress to the English feudal barony of Okehampton, Devon.  
Robert de Courtenay (d.1242) feudal baron of Okehampton, married Lady Mary de Redvers, d. of William de Redvers, 5th Earl of Devon (d.1217)  
John de Courtenay (d.1274)  
Hugh de Courtenay (d.1292)  
Hugh de Courtenay, 9th Earl of Devon (d.1340)  
(Earls of Devon)  
Elizabeth de Courtenay, married Peter I of Courtenay (d.1183), son of King Louis VI of France.  
(Capetian branch)  
Joscelin I, Count of Edessa, married 1. Beatrice (daughter of Constantine I of Armenia), 2. Maria of Salerno (sister of Roger of Salerno)  
Joscelin II, Count of Edessa, married Beatrice  
Joscelin III of Edessa, married Alice of Milly  
Beatrix de Courtenay, married Otto von Botenlauben (Count of Henneberg)  
Agnes, married William of La Mandelie  
Agnes of Courtenay, married 1. Reginald of Marash, 2. Amalric I of Jerusalem, 3. Hugh of Ibelin, 4. Reginald of Sidon  
Isabella of Courtenay, married Thoros II of Armenia  
Geoffrey of Champlay

## References

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1. Cleaveland 18.pt I
2. Cleaveland 9.pt I
3. Cleaveland 10.pt I
4. Sanders, pp.69-70, (Okehampton)

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- Runciman, Steven (1951) *A History of the Crusades: Vols. I-II*. Cambridge University Press
- Sanders, I.J. (1960) *English Baronies*. Oxford
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## External links

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- Cleaveland, Ezra. A Genealogical History of the Noble and Illustrious Family of Courtenay, Exeter, 1735 ([https://archive.org/stream/genealogicalhist00clea/genealogicalhist00clea\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/genealogicalhist00clea/genealogicalhist00clea_djvu.txt))
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